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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 001075

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SUBJECT: TURKEY/IRAQ: GETTING TURKEY TO DO MORE

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[1](#)B. ANKARA 0404 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. ANKARA 066
[1](#)D. 05 ANKARA 7236

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Three years after the crisis of March 2003 and long-standing doubts about the Iraq war, Turkey now seems convinced that Coalition success in Iraq is essential to this country's security. Turkey's contribution to coalition efforts in Iraq is multifaceted. The GOT has expressed a willingness to do more, and it is capable of doing more along the following lines:

-- Engaging the new government, the military, and civil society. We should support Turkey's efforts to contribute to an PRT and open a consulate in Mosul.

-- Coordinating with Iraqi authorities, including the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), to expand the capacity of the Habur Gate and to open additional border crossings.

-- Working more formally and routinely with the central Iraqi government and the KRG in northern Iraq on trade and security issues.

-- Initiating discussions on debt relief, sharing of water resources, and other bilateral issues.

-- Expanding existing training of Iraqi politicians as well as diplomatic and security personnel.

-- Making new contributions, including civil society exchanges in coordination with its BMENA efforts, offering assistance on Avian Influenza preparedness, and providing assistance on disposal of radioactive waste.

-- Establishing better military-to-military ties.

[1](#)2. (C) As always with Iraq, Kurdish-related issues will be key stumbling blocks -- e.g., the PKK, broader Kurdish nationalism, and Kirkuk. If and as Turkish leaders can

better appreciate the leverage they have and the opportunities available to them regarding the Kurdish issue, their diplomacy will be more successful. We welcome Department and Mission Iraq comments on these ideas and suggestions for other areas in which Turkey could make a valuable contribution to our goals in Iraq. End Summary.

Turkey's Contributions to Date

¶3. (C) March 1 marks the third anniversary of the Turkish parliament's vote against allowing the U.S. military to enter Iraq from the north in 2003. Many Turks recognize this for the mistake it was. The government's view is more nuanced; it finds distasteful any overt admission that its actions might have been at fault and has always sought to avoid blame for the downturn in U.S. - Turkish relations that followed.

¶4. (C) Since the parliament's vote three years ago, Turkey has actively supported Iraq and Coalition efforts there. In October 2003, Turkey offered to contribute a brigade to Coalition forces, which Iraq declined. Among the more successful steps was Turkey's permission for Incirlik Airbase to operate as a logistics hub for Coalition efforts in Iraq (and Afghanistan). Since May 2005, nearly 60,000 tons of supplies have been moved and 1890 C-17 sorties flown from Incirlik. Turkey has facilitated the shipment of between 500 and 600 tanker loads of petroleum per day in sustainment fuel, as well as humanitarian fuel and other supplies, through the Habur Gate border crossing. Turkey sells some 250 MW of electricity to Iraq and bilateral trade exceeds USD 3 billion per year. In 2005, an estimated 86 Turkish companies managed 109 projects worth some USD 1.5 billion,

ANKARA 00001075 002.2 OF 004

largely in northern Iraq. Turkey participates in the NATO Training Mission in Iraq and has provided training to over 300 Iraqi diplomats and politicians in Turkey. The GOT has encouraged Sunni participation in Iraq politics, including by knocking Sunni heads together in Istanbul prior to December 15 elections. Turkey opened channels to Iraqi Kurds, and toned down its rhetoric on Kurdish self-rule/independence and on the Turkmen community. Despite security concerns, the MFA is moving ahead with establishing a consulate in Mosul, which Embassy Baghdad and CENTCOM supported.

More Turkey Can Do -- The Political Contribution

¶5. (C) High-Level Contacts. The formation of a new government will provide an opportunity for Turkey to reaffirm its commitment to a democratic, peaceful, and unitary Iraq. We have and will continue to encourage a high-level GOT visit to Baghdad and invitations for Iraqi's new leadership to visit Ankara as soon as a new government is in place. The MFA has told us FM Gul is considering a visit, perhaps followed by PM Erdogan. A short-term goal should be the early resumption of Turkey-Iraq-U.S. trilateral talks on terrorism, which will relieve U.S.-Turkish tensions on the PKK issue.

¶6. (C) Turkish PRT Contribution. Turkey is interested in the PRT concept for Iraq and has sought more information on Coalition intentions. GOT officials suggested Turkey could run a PRT in Kirkuk or Mosul, but more recently said they would be willing to contribute to a PRT. If there is a way to include Turkey in longer-term Coalition planning for the future of Iraq, we should aim to do so.

¶7. (C) Channeling Turkish Engagement. The meeting that FM Gul organized in Istanbul prior to the December elections between disaffected Sunni leaders and U.S. officials was a praiseworthy initiative that reflected Turkey's self-image as a mediator in the region. The GOT is willing to sponsor

similar events in the future and has asked us how it might be most helpful. As long as Turkey is seen as also reaching out to all mainstream political forces in Iraq, we should welcome this type of engagement.

¶8. (C) Training and Exchanges. Turkey has provided training to over 300 Iraqi politicians and diplomats from various Iraqi factions. We should encourage the Turks to expand this and to host other gatherings of Iraqi political, civil society, and business leaders.

¶9. (C) Iraqi Kurds. Turkish rhetoric about Iraqi Kurds has cooled. Ankara still believes the KRG cooperates with the PKK and remains paranoid about Kurdish nationalism. However, Turkey also realizes that the Kurds have a largely autonomous region in northern Iraq, and its businessmen are cashing in on Kurdish stability and success. These factors and historical relationships will lead Ankara to engage the Iraqi Kurds as the best way to moderate their behavior, particularly regarding Kirkuk. These are positive trends, and we should encourage them. The successful closure of the Makhmour refugee camp, which will require Turkish-Iraqi Kurd cooperation on the most neuralgic issue of all -- the PKK, will contribute to this.

The Economic Dimension

¶10. (C) Border Crossings. The single Habur Gate/Ibrahim Khalil crossing between Turkey and Iraq is the physical manifestation of the limits to Turkey-Iraq ties. Enhancements at Habur are underway; they will not be sufficient. Turkish, Iraqi, and Kurdish officials have sparred over competing locations for additional border crossings in a dialogue that has looked designed to prevent progress; no side has really acted like it wants to reach agreement. The two countries have discussed a package that would involve multiple additional crossings, but turmoil and inattention in Baghdad have stymied progress. To ensure a smooth supply of materiel for U.S. forces and to foster trade

ANKARA 00001075 003.2 OF 004

that will be essential for Iraqi economic revival, the U.S. needs to be actively involved in helping work out a viable arrangement.

¶11. (C) Trade and Investment. The GOT has expressed interest in creating a new legal framework for bilateral trade, investment, and transportation. Turkish businessmen point to the relative security and certainty of Ozal-Saddam arrangements in the early 1980s that regulated cross-border trade, including charges and fees, that may have limited opportunities for entrepreneurship by border guards on both sides. A new legal framework for rail, aviation, and road transport would also facilitate trade. Both Turkey and Iraq have an interest in creating a durable payments mechanism that enhances confidence. Such a mechanism will be essential for the continuity of supply, including of problematic fuel and electricity imports.

¶12. (C) Debt Relief. No progress has been made on restructuring Iraq's \$1.6 billion debt to Turkey. This and outstanding commercial debt are obstacles to the development of bilateral trade and investment. A first step should be a high-level Iraqi request to the GOT to begin debt reconciliation and negotiations, but this will then need to be on our bilateral agenda here, too.

¶13. (C) Development Aid. Citing security concerns, Turkey has so far been able to disburse only a small fraction of the \$50 million in aid it promised at the Madrid donor's conference. The GOT wants to develop Iraq's healthcare and municipal water infrastructure. As discussed during PM Koizumi's early January visit here, Japanese partnerships with Turkey on reconstruction and development projects could

provide a way to address Turkish concerns about acting alone.

¶14. (SBU) Turkey's proximity to Iraq and comparative advantages make its companies natural partners for U.S. firms attracted to the Iraqi market. Turkish companies have been active at business conferences like the "Rebuild Iraq" meeting that will be held in May in Amman. Turkey will host a similar event in the southeastern city of Gaziantep in June that will specifically aim at partnerships with third-country companies for work in Iraq. We are encouraging Commerce and FCS to target this opportunity for U.S. business.

Security

¶15. (C) NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I). The GOT currently has four administrative personnel assigned to the NTM-I. We should ask Turkey to increase its contribution and assign trainers as well. We should also encourage Turkey to engage more meaningfully on mil-to-mil relations. The Iraqi Defense Attache told us recently that the Turkish General Staff (TGS) has become more receptive. CENTCOM offered during September 2005 talks with the TGS to explore with the Iraqis joint Iraq-Turkey border patrols. This initiative could be extremely helpful in combating PKK terrorism, smuggling and other illegal cross-border activity, and we should pursue it following formation of a new government.

Other Exchanges

¶16. (C) With our encouragement, Turkey's agriculture ministry recently sent Avian Influenza experts to Iraq to discuss lessons-learned following the December-January AI outbreak here. The government has told us that, together with Jordan, Turkey would be willing to support a program to help Iraq secure radiological materials and waste inherited from the Saddam era. The sharing of water resources is another issue where more could be done. We should foster Turkey-Iraq contacts in the areas of visas and travel facilitation as well.

Getting Past the Kurdish Issue

ANKARA 00001075 004.2 OF 004

¶17. (C) The principal obstacle to a meaningful expansion of Turkey's contributions to Iraq is neuralgia here over Kurdish ambitions and the impact of a de facto or de jure independent Iraqi "Kurdistan" on the large Kurdish minority in southeast Turkey. We must help the Turks to deal realistically with a dynamic, assertive Kurdish region in northern Iraq. We see signs of this already in Ankara's realization that it already has significant economic and political leverage over northern Iraq -- leverage that can only grow (including if turmoil in Iraq should increase). If and as Ankara can bring itself to use this leverage positively to promote strength and stability on its southern border -- including with Iraqi Kurdistan, the more successful will be its, Iraq's and our efforts.
WILSON